

TOP STORIES #113

Welcome to TOP STORIES, which has been published for more than 22 years!
It has now been more than 2 years since we have been publishing weekly.

As a user of Microsoft technologies, you are receiving this publication to stay informed about critical topics such as Microsoft licensing, price increases (some bad news below), end-of-life dates, technical updates, security notices, and more.

I recommend you scan through "**Don't Forget**" which is now a separate document for you to download - it was making TOP STORIES too long to read through.

Reminder that you can access [TOP STORIES AI \("TSAI"\)](#) to search for anything in the archive. You can read more about TSAI in [TOP STORIES #108](#).

You will need an MS ID to sign in, and if you are using your corporate ID, this might require organisational permission.

Check out the **official movie release dates in South Africa for all studios at the end of this email**. The schedule has been updated to provide you with releases four weeks in advance. It is accurate!

Last week's [TOP STORIES #112 is here](#)

If you would like to invite other colleagues to join this newsletter (even if it is just for the movie release dates), they can [click here](#).

Microsoft is announcing significant price increases, read more below....

If you do not want to continue receiving TOP STORIES, click on the unsubscribe link at the bottom of the mail.

Upcoming Shows

The next big computer show of the year is [Computex](#), coming up in May. This is a significant show; we will see big announcements from all the big IT companies, and already there are whispers of a big announcement from AMD on the next generation of Threadripper CPU, which you can [read about here](#).

Account Manager?

Not sure who is your account manager? [Click here for us to help sort that out!](#)

Don't Forget!

This an important section - it summarises all of Microsoft Products that are coming up for End of Support and/or End of Life. The sheer volume of changes and products coming to EoL and EoS is so long that I have made this a separate document, [which you can download here](#). It will be updated at least quarterly (or as necessary) to try and keep you up to date with the ever-changing Microsoft release roadmap.

I recommend you take a look at the document, it provides a lot of detail about what is ending, changing and updating!

Feedback on making it easier to read along with things I may have missed will be appreciated as well!

Updates for this week

There are some new announcements from Microsoft that you need to be aware of in the Microsoft section below - there are price increases etc.....

NO MORE FREE TECHNICAL SUPPORT FROM MICROSOFT

Microsoft has ended it's programs where you could get free support. You can read more about what we have done to mitigate that below.

Microsoft Planner Transition set for August

On the 2nd May, Microsoft announced that Project for web, including Project and Roadmap apps

in Teams, are being retired in August. Microsoft now wants you to transition to Planner as it consolidates into one work experience, and then goes on to explain what features will not be available. There will be no licensing changes or any Migration steps to undertake. You can [read all about this migration here](#).

No more updates for Microsoft Maps - this is now being deprecated and will be removed from the Microsoft Store by July 2025. You can [read more about this here](#).

A big list of announcements under the Microsoft section below - don't forget to scan through them to see what may affect you.

Hardware

Intel's Panther Lake shipping in 2025

Well, just one of them... Hardware with these CPU's inside will ship by the end of 2025, which realistically means you will be able to get your hands on them in Q1 2026. **The big deal about this generation of CPU's is that their NPU TOPS rating alone will be 50**, meaning almost all the notebooks with these CPUS will be Copilot+ compliant.

Some [details about the CPU's have leaked here](#), but they must still be considered speculative. The one we are hopefully seeing in 2025 appears to be for high-performance notebooks; you can [read more about what we might be getting here](#).

It is more important than ever to contact your First Technology account manager to connect you with our hardware specialists to plan your procurement roadmap for notebooks for 2025/6, as it's crucial to standardise on CoPilot+ machines with 32 GB RAM and 1TB of SSD storage, and of course, your rollout of CoPilot to your users.

Microsoft

M365 Plan comparison updated for April

Microsoft Business Premium has been added as a prerequisite for M365E5 Security, and CoPilot Chat has been added as well. You can [download the latest plan here](#).

Microsoft Licensing Guides updated for May

Microsoft has released three updates with minor changes:

- Downgrade Rights
- Flexible Virtualisation Benefit
- Dragon Copilot

You can go to the portal to [download them all here](#).

Exchange, Sharepoint and Skype for Business SE **price increase** for July

The server licenses will go up by 10%, the Core CAL by 15% and the ECAL, 20%.

You can [read the announcement from Microsoft here](#).

Please contact your First Technology Account Manager to connect you with our licensing specialists to help you understand how this may impact you and what measures can be taken to mitigate them.

Hotpatch for Windows now available

Hotpatching for Windows 11 Enterprise is now available. This allows computers to be patched without having to be restarted, hopefully minimising disruptions when PC's need to be patched to prevent the latest cyber attack. You can read more about how it works and [how to get started here](#).

Please contact your First Technology Account manager to connect you with our security and deployment specialists to assist you with activating this technology, should you be licensed for it, which our licensing specialists will also confirm for you.

Purview Pay As You Go Metering requirement.

Microsoft has introduced new Pay-As-You-Go billing meters for Purview, designed to help organisations secure and govern data as it flows through AI applications and agents. These meters are available from 1 May 2025 and will be billed via your Azure Subscription as normal.

If your tenant does not have an Azure Subscription linked by 30 June 2025, these metered features will cease functioning. You can read more about this here.

Please contact your First Technology Account manager to connect you with our Licensing specialists and our Purview experts to ensure that you are able to implement their critical

functions to protect your data as you start to roll out CoPilot - which is so important to do sooner rather than later.

Purview Data Security Investigations (DSI) in public Preview

This solution helps companies protect themselves from risks due to sensitive data exposure. Administrators must activate Purview PAYG and provision Security Compute units to preview this. You can [read more about this here](#).

Please contact your First Technology account manager to connect you with our security specialists to assist in evaluating what is needed to preview this technology and also understand the cost implications as it is billed through Azure.

Windows 11 is Better than 10. Mac Even Better.

In a press release from Microsoft that makes some extravagant claims about Windows 11 which you can [read more about here](#), there is [also a post from a Senior Microsoft executive](#) explaining why an Apple MAC is better for some tasks.

This is a refreshing view of a product's good and bad features, and that one product cannot be the best at everything. Increasingly companies need to handle hybrid environments while maintaining licensing compliance with Microsoft, and interestingly, a carefully profiled environment can SAVE you on licensing with MAC's as your corporate workhorses.

For me, I'm stuck with Windows - I have been using it my whole life.... MAC - it's alien!

It may be well advised to contact your First Technology account manager to connect you with our licensing and hardware specialists to see if and how you can run your environment more efficiently with licensing and making some users happy with MAC's?

Security

Hackers abuse IPv6 to gain access

IPv6 is an intriguing protocol designed to replace IPv4 when the world exhausts its IPv4 addresses, yet IPv4 seems to just keep going for most requirements.

IPv6 is also something that we keep enabled on our networks in case something might need it, but mostly, we do not, but it will not stay that way.....

[Here is an example of how hackers are using a feature of IPv6 to gain access](#).

I have addressed this issue before in [TOP STORIES #77](#), where I suggested that disabling it is actually a good idea unless you specifically need it.

Upgrading to IPv6 is something you will have to do at some point in the future, and entire countries are migrating, but progress is challenging; though some countries, like [surprisingly Vietnam, are already at around 65% adoption](#). IPv6 adoption rates worldwide are increasing, as [seen in this report from CISCO](#), with France, India, and Germany heading for 80%.

Please contact your First Technology account manager to connect you with our CISCO, Palo Alto, Forti, Dell, F-Secure, Microsoft, DarkTrace, etc specialists to work with you on formulating your plan around IPv6 adoption while also ensuring it remains switched off where possible until you need it to limit your attack surface.

7 out of 10 businesses worldwide were hit with Ransomware in 2024

Ransomware remains the dominant threat to businesses worldwide.

Worse, only 10% of the ransomed companies recovered 90% of their data. This is a reminder that you cannot stop being vigilant. Many of these attacks start with social engineering of gullible users who have not been trained on the latest suspicious markers. You can [read more on this depressing report here](#),

Please contact your First Technology account manager to connect you with our Security specialists to help with Security assessments, find ways to reduce your attack surface and help ensure that all the components of the Microsoft Security Stack that you are licensed for are activated and **CORRECTLY CONFIGURED**. We frequently find companies with security measures that are active, but useless because they are not configured correctly. Just because a technology is switched on, does NOT mean it is working! Just asking our engineers to check that your measures are actually working is highly advised!

Cloud and AI

When AI Kisses A**

Endgadget has [posted an article about OpenAI having to roll back an update](#) that made GPT-4o too "[Sycophanty](#)".

ChatGPT had, quite literally, turned into what one user dubbed a "pathologically agreeable suck-

up.” The March update softened the bot’s tone so much that it lost its edge — dodging questions, parroting flattery, and sounding like a motivational speaker trapped in a feedback loop.

OpenAI says they’re restoring its "helpfulness, accuracy and verbosity" — and crucially, its backbone.

Here we are with AI's that are now starting pass the **Turing Threshold** (ableit carefully crafted) and now get having to be "reset" because they kiss-ass too much!!!

We are only 3 years into our journey of AI's being generally available and already we are faced with these new challenges that would have been Science Fiction 4 years ago!

When it comes to rolling out AI in corporate environments, a more measured strategy and process is required, focusing on Security First. **This is where Microsoft is leading, while being a follower regarding raw AI "smarts".**

AI is becoming pervasive and inevitable in our lives, and it is critical that you start planning (if you have not already) your deployment of your security framework (Purview), and then the actual deployment of CoPilot with the necessary user awareness training.

Please contact your First Technology account manager to start planning this journey, as First Technology Group has all the skills and certifications twice over to work with you on this.

It is so important not to delay this.

What's up at FTG

Cloud costing you more than expected?

First Technology Group is stepping up your cloud financial management game with Umbrella (formerly Anodot Cost) — our preferred platform for FinOps and Cloud Cost Management. Umbrella unlocks faster innovation, deeper insights, and robust cost optimisation, empowering you to proactively manage your cloud spend and enhance financial efficiency.

As a Platinum preferred partner across Africa, FTG brings you unmatched expertise and tailored support, ensuring a smooth integration of Umbrella into your current systems with minimal operational disruption.

Here's what **Umbrella** means:

- **Enhanced Cost Management:** Full visibility of your cloud expenses to pinpoint savings.
- **Improved Financial Efficiency:** Powerful analytics to guide smarter cloud investments.
- **Seamless Integration:** Effortlessly combines with your existing infrastructure.

Please contact your First Technology account manager to connect with our SAM or FinOps teams to see how they can help you optimise your cloud costs. Even if you may think you have your costs under control there is no harm in asking somebody else to take a look.... just in case!

Free Microsoft Support Ends

Microsoft has ended free technical support for Azure.

The only free support you now get is for billing and subscription issues.

Microsoft now charges **\$650 per support incident - NB! Not a typo!!**

BUI, FTG's Cloud and Security division has introduced a new support model that mitigates some of this impact - you can [read more and sign up for more information here](#).

Please contact your First Technology account manager to discuss your support requirements, as First Technology group can provide **GLOBAL SUPPORT 24/7/365** for a wide range of vendors, including Microsoft.

FT-KZN Upgrades Senate Chambers

The chambers at Mangosuthu University have been completely upgraded with state-of-the-art technology to facilitate how modern meetings and presentations are conducted. This is one of many examples of what the team in KZN is able to achieve. You can [read more about this here](#).

If you think your installation might be a bit complicated and needs integration with multiple vendors, contact your First Technology account manager, who can connect you with a team that can help.

Pitfalls with Dynamics 365

The CRMTeam, of First Technology Group [have published a document on ITWeb](#) about avoiding the pitfalls of a D365 Customer engagement implementation. If you are looking to dive down the D365 rabbit hole, this is a good article to read. Then, contact our Dynamics 365 specialists on the [CRM Team website](#) or through your First Technology account manager.

CoPilot Security Demo

BUI, FTG's security division, can present CoPilot for Security information-sharing sessions, workshops and demos.

In light of ongoing attacks that will only get sneakier, it is essential to contact your First Tech Group account manager to arrange to attend a session. You can also [request a session here](#).

What does a World Class SoC look like, and how does it work?

You are invited to book a tour of one of our SoC (Security Operations Center) nodes (and there are still parts we can't show you). You can [book for the tour here](#).

BUI blog - 6th and 7th (Entra Suite Overview) Videos Available

FTG's Azure and security division, BUI's Video Blog, has been updated with 2 more videos.

The [6th Edition addresses improvements to Defender XDR](#), and the [7th Edition is crucial to review, as it provides an overview of the Microsoft Entra Suite](#).

Joint Standard 2 on Cyber Security and Resilience

BUI has published a 1-page guide for you to gauge your compliance and, if you have concerns, to reach out to the BUI specialists for assistance. The [guide is available here](#).

BUI Opens 4th Cyber Security Operations Centre in Kenya

As part of BUI's investment in talent in Africa and the broader East African region, BUI, together with the Microsoft country manager for Kenya, held the inauguration ceremony of the new Cyber SOC. You can read [more about this launch here](#).

BUI announced as a Diversity in Security award finalist in the Microsoft Security Excellence Awards. The company was honoured among a global field of industry leaders who demonstrated success across the security landscape during the past 12 months. You can [read more about this award here](#), where on the 28th April Microsoft will recognise the finalists in 9 categories.

Movies

We have a good lineup for the next month - Thunderbolts, Final Destination, Lilo & Stitch. Mission Impossible are highlights.

Now Playing: [Thunderbolts](#) - one of the better Marvel movies go watch it!

Now Playing: [Fight or Flight](#)

Now Playing: [Die KwikSilwers](#)

Now Playing: [Riff Raff](#)

09 May: [Juliet & Romeo](#) (Trailer) [IMDB Summary here](#).

09 May: [Sabbatical](#)

09 May: [Shadow Force](#)

16 May: [The Salt Path](#)

16 May: [Final Destination: Bloodlines](#)

16 May: [Hurry up Tomorrow](#)

23 May: [Lilo & Stitch](#)

23 May: [Mission Impossible: The Final Reckoning](#)

23 May: [Die Dekonstruksie van Retta Blom](#) trailer is [here](#)

30 May: [Karate Kid: Legends](#)

30 May: [The Phoenician Scheme](#)

30 May: [Guns Up](#)

First Technology | Midrand | Johannesburg, GAUTENG 2191 ZA

[Unsubscribe](#) | [Update Profile](#) | [Our Privacy Policy](#) | [Constant Contact Data Notice](#)



Try email & social marketing for free!